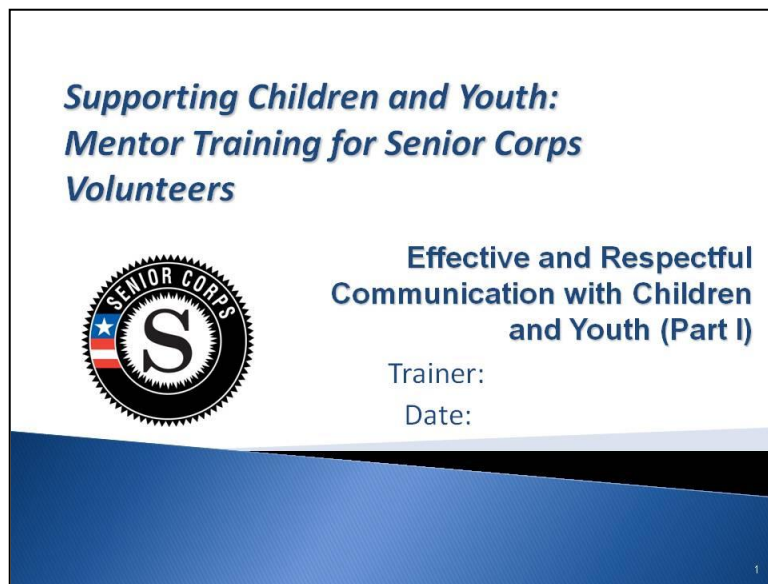


***Supporting Children and Youth:  
Mentor Training for Senior Corps Volunteers***

**Module 3**

**Effective and Respectful Communication  
with Children and Youth (Part I)**



## Module 3. Effective and Respectful Communication with Children and Youth (Part I)

### INTRODUCTION

Establishing and maintaining effective communication with children and youth is rewarding, and challenging. This workshop provides an overview of some of the key features of effective communication including nonverbal communication and active listening, as well as a few simple strategies to create strong and respectful communication habits in the mentoring relationship.

This workshop includes a brief lecture, opportunities to practice good communication skills (including a small group exercise), and a short reflection activity. It is recommended that you do a full 2-hour workshop to allow more time for group discussion. ***Remember that you do not need to present this workshop “as is”.*** Modify the session to fit your participants’ needs and to address the age groups they are serving.

### Objectives

By the end of the session, participants will:

- Strengthen their awareness and use of nonverbal communication
- Understand and improve skills in active listening
- Review and practice simple strategies to use to build effective and respectful communication with children and youth

### Visual Aids (Power Point) and Facilitator’s Notes


If you are using the PowerPoint slides included with this curriculum, Facilitator’s Notes are provided under each slide. These notes provide the same information as the Facilitator’s Notes included in this document, but they are not as detailed.

It is recommended that you use easel paper, a whiteboard, or a chalkboard to note responses to some of the “callout” questions and important points that participants make during the exercise “debrief.” This validates participants’ knowledge and reinforces learning. You may want to write the headings on sheets of easel paper in advance to save time.

This symbol will cue you as to when you might jot down responses:



### Handouts

The handouts for this session follow the Facilitator’s Notes and Instructions. Handouts 1-6 should be distributed during the session; this symbol in the Facilitator’s Notes will cue you as to when: . The remaining handouts can be distributed at the end of the session.

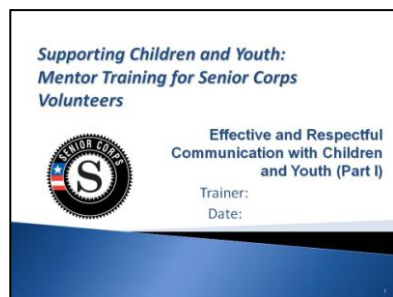
1. Warm-up: Nonverbal Communication
2. Strategies for Successful Nonverbal Communication (optional)
3. Quiz! Paying Attention to Nonverbal Communication
4. Strategies for Active Listening (optional)
5. Active Listening Exercise

6. Reflection: Nonverbal Communication and Active Listening
7. Types of Nonverbal Communication and Body Language (optional)
8. Active Listening Overview (optional)
9. Recommended Resources for Building Effective Communication Skills (optional)
10. Training Feedback Survey

## SESSION AGENDA

Activity	Estimated Time	Method	Slide Numbers
<b>I. Welcome</b>	<b>20 min.</b>		1
A. Learning Objectives	5 min.	Lecture	2
B. Warm-Up: Communication and Relationships <i>Warm-up: Nonverbal Communication</i>	15 min.	Pairs/Large group discussion	
<b>II. Nonverbal Communication</b>	<b>30 min.</b>		
A. Nonverbal Communication Overview	10 min.	Lecture/Large group discussion	3
B. Nonverbal Communication Strategies <i>Strategies for Successful Nonverbal Communication (optional)</i>	10 min.	Lecture	4-5
C. Quiz: Test your Knowledge <i>Quiz! Paying Attention to Nonverbal Communication</i>	10 min.	Pairs/Large group discussion	
<b>III. Active Listening</b>	<b>50 min.</b>		
A. Listening Strategies with Children and Youth <i>Strategies for Active Listening (optional)</i>	10 min.	Lecture/Large group discussion	6-8
B. Exercise: Active Listening Practice <i>Active Listening Exercise</i>	30 min. 10 min.	Trios/Small group discussion Large group discussion "debrief"	9
<b>IV. Reflection: Self Evaluation</b>	<b>15 min.</b>		
Reflection: Nonverbal Communication and Active Listening Skills <i>Reflection: Nonverbal Communication and Active Listening</i>	15 min.	Individual self reflection	10
<b>V. Closing</b> <i>Types of Nonverbal Communication and Body Language (optional)</i> <i>Active Listening Overview (optional)</i> <i>Recommended Resources for Building Effective Communication Skills (optional)</i> <i>Training Feedback Survey</i>	<b>5 min.</b>	Lecture	11

## FACILITATOR'S NOTES AND INSTRUCTIONS



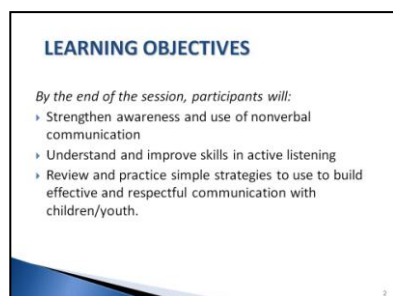
If you are using the PowerPoint slides, have slide 1 up on the screen.

### ***I. Welcome***

Welcome participants and introduce the workshop: "Creating and maintaining good, quality communication with children and youth is rewarding, but also challenging. You already have communication skills, and today you will have an opportunity to really think about those good communication habits and practice your skills."

### ***A. Learning Objectives***

Show slide 2.



Describe the learning objectives. In this workshop, participants will:

- Strengthen their awareness and use of nonverbal communication
- Understand and improve skills in active listening
- Review and practice simple strategies to use to build effective and respectful communication with children and youth

### ***B. Warm-Up: Relationships and Communication***

Tell participants that quality communication is one of the key features of meaningful relationships. In those quality relationships, adults whom children and youth respect model positive behavior, teach social skills, and provide emotional support.

We know that when relationships between children/youth and adults are strong, they can:

- Positively affect youth's psychological health (e.g. lower stress levels and help them improve decision-making such as ones relating to substance use and physical violence)
- Improve academic performance (success in school)
- Support success in relationships as they enter adulthood

Chances are that people who influence others in those kinds of positive ways are powerful listeners.

- Whether instinctively or through practice, they developed the skill of communication and empathy.

- Communication is not just saying words; it is creating an understanding. Interestingly enough, the key to effective communication does not involve talking as much as *nonverbal* communication (body language and active listening).
- By paying closer attention to other people's nonverbal behaviors, you will also improve your own ability to communicate nonverbally.

“Let’s try a quick exercise.”

Ask everyone to get into pairs, or work with the person on their right.

📄 Distribute slips of paper cut out from the *Warm-up: Nonverbal Communication* sheet (or put the roles on index cards). One person in each pair will be the “speaker”; the other person will be the “listener.” They should not show the slip of paper to their partner.

Tell the participants: “Read your strip of paper and take a moment to consider your role and think about what you are going to say or do. Don’t show the paper to your partner. When I say, “Go!”, turn to your partner and begin. You will have just two minutes for this exercise.”



Start the exercise (“Go!”), and after two minutes, stop the conversations so the group can discuss. You may want to jot down the main ideas from the discussion on easel paper.

**CALLOUT:** “Speakers: Did you feel listened to? What did your partner do that made you feel that way?”

The “speakers” may mention that they didn’t feel the person was really paying attention, and that they felt ignored or disrespected. Ask them to identify why they felt that way and jot down their ideas (no eye contact, looked away, slumped). Let the group know that the listeners were supposed to be inattentive as part of the exercise.

**CALLOUT:** “Listeners: What emotions did you see in your partner as s/he was speaking? How do you know that?”

The “listeners” may have more trouble getting at the emotion of the speakers since they were busy being inattentive! Some may note that the speaker’s energy seemed to decrease as they paid less attention.

If it is not mentioned during the discussion, remind the group that when we don't feel listened to, we feel disrespected and devalued. On the other hand, powerful listeners can make us feel "heard" - supported and appreciated!

**TIP: As an alternative to this exercise, ask people to share experiences.** Ask participants to think about a time when they felt disrespected and devalued because someone wasn't listening to them. Ask two people to share. Then, before the discussion gets too negative, ask two other people to give examples of the opposite: a conversation that left them feeling supported and appreciated because someone really listened to what they had to say.

## II. Nonverbal Communication

### A. Nonverbal Communication Overview

Tell participants that research shows that the majority of our daily communication is “nonverbal”, but what does that mean?

- It means we are using our body to convey information – our facial expressions, gestures, eye contact, posture, tone of our voice – more than words. In a rapidly flowing back-and-forth, when we interact with others, we continuously give and receive countless wordless signals.
- It also means that sometimes we are sending confusing or negative nonverbal signals without realizing it. Nonverbal communication can be misinterpreted due to cultural, ethnic, gender, or age differences, among other things. With misinterpretation, both connection and trust are lost in our relationships.

**CALLOUT:** “Take a minute and think about the nonverbal communication or body language you have seen or might see in the children and youth you serve.”



List key emotions on easel paper (e.g. happiness, anger, sadness) and ask the group to call out some nonverbal ways we would recognize those emotions in another person. Remind them that nonverbal cues could be vocal like sighs, mumblings, voice tone, etc. (See the example below.)

**CALLOUT:** “What are some of the body language or nonverbal communication signals you might see for each of these emotions?”

#### Example

Happiness/Joy	Anger	Sadness/Hurt	Fear/Nervousness	Disgust	Surprise
Smile, eye contact, high voice tone, animated gestures	Clenched fists, raised voice, crossed arms, slouching	Sighs, frowning, welled eyes	Looking down or away, mumbling	Rolling of the eyes, furrowed brow	Raised eyebrows

The group will probably notice that some nonverbal signals could go under more than one emotion. Ask: “If the same nonverbal signal could be expressing different emotions, how do you know what it means?”

If the group doesn't mention it, note that it depends on the context (the situation, what is being said), but they can also consider the cluster of cues such as the child/youth's tone of voice, body posture, etc. It isn't a single cue or signal but the group of verbal and nonverbal cues that inform us about what the speaker (child/youth) is thinking.

"Let's look first at deepening our understanding of body language or nonverbal signals that children and youth are sending, as well as noting how effective we are at communicating nonverbally with others."

**TIP. Walk around alternative.** Instead of doing a large group call out, put the different emotions on several easel pads around the room and have the participants move around with markers and note nonverbal signals for each.

### Nonverbal Communication

*An important skill that allows you to:*

- › Accurately "read" children and youth, including unspoken messages they are sending
- › Respond with cues that show you understand, notice, and care
- › Create trust in relationships by sending signals that reinforce your words

Show slide 3.

Nonverbal communication is an important tool and has a huge impact on how successful you are in developing relationships, expressing yourself, connecting with others and finding your way through challenging situations and relationships. Understanding nonverbal communication allows you to:

- **Accurately "read" children and youth**, including the emotions they're feeling and the unspoken messages they're sending. For example, Janel's sad face and slumped shoulders tell her mentor that something is not going well, even before they greet each other.
- **Respond with nonverbal cues** that show others that you understand, notice, and care. So in the case of Janel, her mentor might slow down the pace of the greeting, offer a hug (if appropriate) and lower her voice tone.
- **Create trust** and clarity in relationships by sending nonverbal signals that match up with your words. When your enthusiastic words congratulating a child on success are matched with a smile and energized voice, the message you are sending is clear and strong.

All of our nonverbal behaviors—the gestures we make, the way we sit, how fast or how loud we talk, how close we stand, how much eye contact we make—send strong messages. They can send messages of interest, trust, and desire for connection, or they can generate disinterest, distrust, and confusion.



**B. Nonverbal Communication Strategies**

Show slide 4.



“What do we need to do with nonverbal communication when we work with children and youth? We need to be aware of the cues we are sending and improve our ability to pick up on their cues. Let’s look at a few strategies.”

**Pay attention**

- People can communicate information in numerous ways so pay attention to things like eye contact, gestures, posture, body movements, and tone of voice. All of these signals can express important information that isn't put into words.
- When you pay attention to other people's nonverbal behaviors, you will improve your own ability to communicate nonverbally.

**Use good eye contact**

- When people fail to look others in the eye, it can seem as if they are trying to hide something.
- On the other hand, too much eye contact can seem confrontational or intimidating. In some cultures it is disrespectful. Be aware that some children/youth will feel eye contact is too intense.
- While eye contact is an important part of communication, it's important to remember that good eye contact does not mean staring fixedly into someone's eyes.
- Some communication experts recommend direct eye contact last four to five seconds at a time.

**TIP: Talk more about eye contact.** Many people are uncomfortable with direct eye contact. You may want to ask participants to talk about the levels of eye contact that they feel uncomfortable with, and why.

**Check for inconsistencies**


- Nonverbal communication should reinforce what is being said. If someone's words do not match their nonverbal behaviors— if you get the feeling that someone isn't being honest or that something is "off"—you should pay careful attention. You may be picking up on a mismatch between verbal and nonverbal cues. For example, someone might tell you everything is okay while frowning and staring at the ground.
- When words fail to match up with nonverbal signals, focus on nonverbal expressions of moods, thoughts, and emotions.
- Consider all of the nonverbal signals you are sending and receiving, from eye contact to tone of voice and body language. Are they consistent or inconsistent with what you are trying to communicate?

**Concentrate on your tone of voice when speaking**

- Your tone of voice can convey a wealth of information, from enthusiasm to disinterest to anger.
- Start noticing how your tone of voice affects how others respond to you, and try using tone of voice to emphasize ideas that you want to communicate. For example, if you want to show genuine interest in something, express your enthusiasm by using an animated (lively) tone of voice.

**Look at nonverbal communication signals together, as a group**

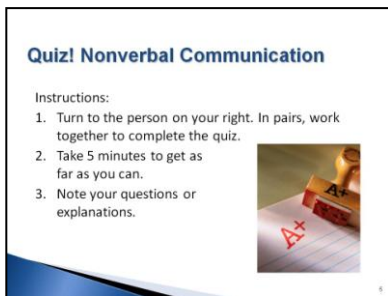
- The key to accurately reading nonverbal behavior is to look for the cluster of signals that appear to reinforce a message.
- Don't read too much into a single gesture or nonverbal cue. A single cue can mean any number of things, or maybe even nothing at all. If you place too much emphasis on just one signal, you might misunderstand what a person is trying to communicate.

 (Optional) Distribute the handout *Strategies for Successful Non-verbal Communication*. This handout is a review of the discussion and includes a few more strategies.


**TIP: Highlight strategies that you feel are most important.** Go through the discussion points that you feel are most important for your participants to hear. As you describe the strategy, try to model what you are saying. For example, use eye contact, gestures, and a lively voice to express enthusiasm.

**C. Quiz: Test Your Knowledge**

Show slide 5.

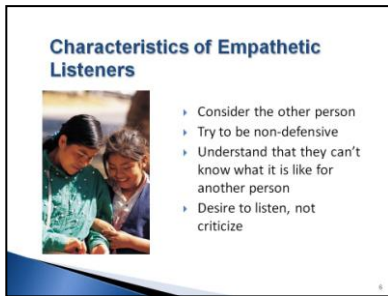


“Let’s try a short quiz to test your knowledge about nonverbal communication so far. This time, work with the person on your left.”

 Distribute the handout, *Quiz: Nonverbal Communication*, one for each pair. Tell participants to take 5 minutes to see how far they can get with it. Ask them to jot down notes or questions they have.

After 5 minutes, bring everyone back together to discuss. As you ask the group for the answers, provide an opportunity for the participants to offer their thoughts and discuss alternative answers.

**TIP. Customize this brief discussion.** Use this discussion to focus on the populations your volunteers serve and help participants think about those populations and situations that they have experienced. You may even want to customize the “quiz” to steer the discussion toward situations you want them to consider.



### III. Active Listening

Show slide 6.

"The way you look, move, and react tell the other person whether or not you care and how well you are listening. Now we want to address listening skills, or 'active listening.'"

#### A. Listening Strategies with Children and Youth

Tell participants: "Some of you may be worried about having a conversation with a child or youth. Well, you may be heartened to know that a primary role will be to *listen* to that individual. This is key to developing strong communication skills, and ultimately what builds relationships."

We hear that words are cheap and listening is rare. According to researchers (and our best friends), the people that we see as kind and compassionate, that are *empathetic* listeners, do the following:

- Consider the other person, rather than having to project their own feelings and ideas onto that person.
- Try to be non-defensive, rather than try to protect themselves. If you are thinking about defending yourself or your points of view, it is difficult to focus on what the other person is saying.
- Understand that they cannot truly know what it like for another person; they can only imagine the roles, viewpoints, or experiences of the other person.
- Desire to listen and not criticize. They want to understand the other person rather than to achieve either agreement from or change in that person.

"They are also active listeners."

**CALLOUT:** "What is active listening? What do you think of when you hear that term?" Give the group a few minutes to respond and then show slide 7.

**Active Listening...**

- › Is attentive; involves both listening and responding
- › Uses nonverbal communication
- › May include repeating what was said to make sure you are hearing correctly
- › Validates and empathizes
- › Withholds judgment and advice
- › Helps avoid misunderstandings

**Active listening:**

- Is a way of listening attentively while someone else speaks, giving that person (the child or youth) your undivided attention. It involves both listening and providing feedback.
- Uses nonverbal communication.
- Can include paraphrasing and reflecting back what is said. It places importance on making sure you are hearing what the child or youth is saying and then validating and empathizing (understanding).
- Helps avoid misunderstandings, because you confirm that you really understand what the child/youth has said.
- Withholds judgment and advice. This helps the child/youth open up and speak their mind.

“Active listening is a structured form of listening and responding that focuses the attention on the child or youth. The goal of active listening is to improve mutual understanding. Let’s take a look at some active listening strategies.”

**Strategies for Active Listening**

- › Give the child/youth your undivided attention. Listen fully.
- › Restate content.
- › Ask questions for clarification.
- › Identify the feeling and emphasize.



Show slide 8.

**Give the child/youth your undivided attention; listen fully.**

- Often when people talk to each other, they don’t listen attentively. They interrupt, give advice or judge. They are often distracted, half listening, and half thinking about something else. They assume that they have heard what is being said many times before, so rather than paying attention, they focus on how they are going to respond.
- Listening fully means: facing the child/youth, using nonverbal cues such as facial expressions, minimizing distractions (phones, multi-tasking), and making eye contact. Focus on what is being said and respond appropriately to show you understand

**Restate content.**

- The listener (you) fully pays attention and then restates or summarizes, in your own words, what you think the child/youth has said. On average, we can hear four times faster than we can talk, so we have the ability to sort ideas as they come in, and be ready for more.


- You do not have to agree; the goal is simply to state what you think the child/youth has said. This enables the child/youth to find out whether you really understood. If you didn't get it, the child/youth can explain some more.

**Ask questions for clarification.**

- After waiting until the child/youth has finished speaking, you let him/her know that you are making a good effort to understand by asking relevant questions to clarify.
- Often asking for a specific example is useful. This also helps the child/youth evaluate their own opinions and perspective. ("What does she say that makes you feel disrespected? Can you give me an example?")
- Words such as "Really?," "Interesting," as well as more direct prompts ("how" and "what" questions) help clarify and encourage more conversation: "What did you do then?" or "How do you think that happened?" or "Tell me more about that; what do you think about it?"
- Avoid "why" questions, if possible. Youth typically answer, "I don't know" or respond defensively.

**Identify the feeling and empathize.**

- It can be helpful to understand the child/youth's words in terms of feelings. Instead of just repeating what happened, the active listener might reflect feelings. This confirms that you understood what happened and the child/youth's feeling about it.
- Empathize without telling the child/youth how they should be feeling. For example, "I imagine that you might feel frustrated when you can't figure out how to complete your math homework", or "I wonder if that made you mad to keep getting yelled at for talking during class."

 (Optional) Distribute the handout, *Strategies for Active Listening*. This handout reviews some of the earlier discussion points and includes additional tips.

**TIP: Remind participants that they can also help children and youth build communication skills by example.** Volunteers can demonstrate good active listening skills through their interactions with other adults, such as station staff. Showing children that communication begins by listening to the other person is a good way to teach them respectful behavior and communication skills.


**B. Exercise: Active Listening Practice**

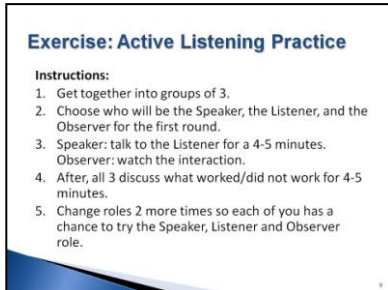
The purpose of this activity is to give each person the opportunity to practice communication skills and get constructive feedback from their peers.

Show slide 9.

YOU WILL NEED: Copies of the handout, *Active Listening Exercise*; easel paper and a marker for taking notes during “debrief”.

**INSTRUCTIONS**

1.  Distribute the handout *Active Listening Exercise* to each participant. Read over the instructions with them.
2. Ask participants to get into groups of 3 according to the age group of children/youth with whom they serve: 3-5 years old (preschool) 6-8 years old (k-3<sup>rd</sup> grade), 9-11 years old (4<sup>th</sup> – 6<sup>th</sup> grade), 12-14 years old (7<sup>th</sup>-9<sup>th</sup> grade), 15-18 years old (10<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup> grade).
3. Ask each group to choose who will be the Listener (mentor role), Speaker (child/youth role), or Observer for the first round. Let them know that they will all have a chance to try the three roles.
4. Tell participants, “Take 1 minute to sink into your role. Then the first Speaker will talk with the Listener for about 4 minutes. The Observer should watch the interaction.”
5. Call “time” after 5 minutes, and ask the small groups to discuss the interaction for about 5 minutes. Remind the groups that the purpose of practice is to learn listening skills. Feedback and suggestions from both Speaker and Observer are essential to the learning process. Encourage the groups to give honest but helpful information to the Listener. For example, if the Listener is having difficulty asking questions, reflecting, or summarizing, offer advice on how to do it better. For the small group discussions:
  - The Listener will then discuss the listening experience with the two other members of the subgroup: What was comfortable? Difficult? Did you stay with the speaker? What seemed to work? What would you do differently?
  - Then the Speaker will share his/her feelings about the interaction: Did you feel listened to? Was it helpful? Did the Listener have any habits you found distracting?
  - The Observer will then share observations: What seemed to be working well?



6. After a few minutes, ask everyone trade roles and repeat the process (steps #4 and #5). Go through the 4-5 minutes of talking and listening and 5 minutes of exchanging feedback twice more so that each person gets a chance in each role.

#### DEBRIEF

Bring the group back together for discussion. Ask the groups to summarize:

- Listeners: What did you notice?
- Speakers: What did you notice?
- How is this related to feeling heard and understood?
- What in particular would be relevant to working with children/youth (the populations they will be serving)?



You may want to use the easel paper to record the main points of the large group discussion.

**TIP. Decrease the time spent on the large group “debrief” if you are running out of time.** During the small group discussions, you may want to walk around the room and jot down some of the main points you are hearing. After you get the large group together, repeat these points and ask if anyone has anything to add; if they agree or disagree; and ask for clarification on some of the critiques you heard during the small group discussions, if needed.




#### ***IV. Reflection: Self Evaluation***

Show slide 10.



Tell participants that today they have reviewed and deepened their communication skills and knowledge, shared their experiences and expertise with one another and, hopefully gained some new insight and/or skills. Remind them that communication is a lifelong pursuit and we are always on the journey to improve our awareness and skills.

 Distribute the handout, *Reflection: Nonverbal Communication and Active Listening*.

Invite participants to complete the Reflection handout individually. The goal is to help them review specific strategies to improve active listening skills. Remind them that this self evaluation is for their benefit and the rating is only meant to help them identify one area to where they might want to practice.

Encourage them to identify concrete steps to take to continue their skills such as the putting the name of another participant with whom they could practice, asking their spouse to help them with a particular strategy, etc.

After 5-10 minutes, you may want to ask if anyone would share an example of one way they will try to improve, as inspiration for the group.


**TIP: Explore nonverbal communication resources for serving the elderly.** Are you also training volunteers who are serving elderly clients, or partnering with agencies that work with the elderly? See *Providing Independent Living Support: Training for Senior Corps Volunteers*, a free CNCS training resource aimed at senior volunteers serving elderly clients. *Module 6, Paying Attention to Body Language*, contains information, tips and exercises to raise volunteers' awareness about nonverbal communication with their elderly clients.  
<http://www.nationalserviceresources.org/indep-living-training-curriculum>

## V. Closing

Show slide 11.



Remind participants that not only do children and youth benefit from the one-on-one attention they get from volunteers, but volunteers are also role modeling good listening and communication skills: “You are teaching by example how to be a caring person and a good friend.”

 (Optional) Distribute the remaining handouts:

- *Types of Nonverbal Communication and Body Language*
- *Active Listening Overview*
- *Recommended Resources for Building Effective Communication Skills*

**TIP: Customize the handouts.** You may want to adapt the handouts to add your own tips and recommendations, or print some of the information available on the websites listed in the *Recommended Resources* handout.

Last, ask participants to complete a *Training Feedback Survey* to help you improve the next workshop.

Ask participants if there are any more questions or last words before you close. Make any final announcements and thank participants for attending the presentation.

**TIP: Leave the “optional” handouts on a table in the back of the room.** Rather than distributing handouts at intervals, you may want to give participants the option of taking one or more of the handouts home at the end of the workshop as they leave.

**MODULE 3 REFERENCES**

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